

DB CONSULTING GROUP

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Coordinator Ladies and gentlemen, welcome and thank you for joining the

Neighborhood Networks' conference call. Joining you now is Ebony

Ross. Please go ahead, ma'am.

E. Ross Thank you, Barbara. Good afternoon and welcome to the Neighborhood

Networks' January conference call, "Best Foot Forward: Enhancing the

Public Image of Your Neighborhood Networks Center."

My name is Ebony Ross and I'm one of the technical assistance managers
that will be working with you as we address the various Neighborhood
Networks' technical assistance needs across the country. Before I
introduce today's presenters, I want to remind the Multifamily
Neighborhood Networks centers that the Strategic Tracking and Reporting
Tool also known as the START Business Plan contains resource materials
to help survey residents' interests and needs as well as information on

developing an internal marketing plan. If you have questions about the START Business Plan, resident surveys, internal marketing plans or general questions pertaining to Neighborhood Networks, please call the Neighborhood Networks Information centerline at (888) 312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood Networks' Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. Again, the information line is (888) 312-2743 and the Web site is www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. I also want to remind our listeners that a verbatim transcript and audio of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks' Web site in about two weeks.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome four new Neighborhood Networks centers to the Neighborhood Networks' family. Please join me in welcoming the St. John's Empowerment Center - Pine Bluff, which is located in Pine Bluff, Arkansas; the Learning Center of Forest Arbor in Ypsilanti, Michigan; Plymouth Avenue Townhomes Neighborhood Networks Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the Meadowood Park Apartments NN Center in Erwin, Texas. A big welcome to each of you. Please note that we look forward to working with you and invite you to contact us with questions by using the information line, (888) 312-2743.

Today, we will discuss the importance of public relations strategies and positioning Neighborhood Networks centers in a positive and proactive stance. Participation in this call will provide an understanding of how your center's image affects its level of success and the critical elements needed to design and develop a successful public relations campaign.

I'm going to kick off things with a general overview on public relations and will then introduce our four experienced presenters to share some of their public relations strategies and the impact on their NN centers in communities.

Today's conference call topic, "Best Foot Forward: Enhancing the Public Image of Your Neighborhood Networks Center," is an important one in that public relations can help Neighborhood Networks centers and its public adapt mutually to each other.

Public relations can help NN centers reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions within their communities. Your public relations strategy can serve to bring private and public policies into harmony. In order to achieve your NN center goals, you must develop effective relationships

with many different audiences such as employees, residents, potential partners, local communities, shareholders and other institutions and with society at large.

The effective management of NN centers should include understanding the attitudes and values of your public in order to achieve organizational goals. The external environment shapes the goals themselves. The public relations strategy will act as a conduit to manage, mediate, and help translate the established organizational goals into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy in action.

As a management function, public relations encompasses the following five elements. One, anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact for good or bad, the operations and plans of the organization; two, consulting management in all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibility; three, researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to successfully implement the goals of the

Neighborhood Networks center. These may include marketing strategies, financial planning, fund raising initiatives, employee training, community or government relations, and additional programming.

Four, planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy and image. Five, setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities - in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.

In helping to define and implement public policy or image enhancements, the public relations strategy should use a variety of professional communication skills and strategies in an integrated role, both within the organization and between the organization and the external environment. Remember, public awareness is essential in any public relations campaign. It is important to keep the public informed about services you are offering the community. You need to communicate your contribution to the community on a consistent basis to inform and reach out to your community.

You can do this by utilizing press releases, media kits, special events, advertisements and public service announcements, also known as PSAs,

speeches and public appearances. I'm going to go through each of those just to give you an idea of what we're talking about.

For instance, press releases. A press release is a short document, usually a one-pager aimed at raising awareness and calling attention to an event or newsworthy happening at your NN center. Press releases are sent to all areas of the media - print, radio and television. If it is deemed newsworthy by the media, it can generate a multitude of public awareness. Oftentimes, if one source picks up on your release, it creates a domino effect, and others run the story, as well. It is important to note that no matter how big or newsworthy the subject of your press release is, poor writing can scare off the media. Therefore, make sure to take your time to develop a well-written, copyedited piece that will draw the eye of the media and the community.

Secondly, media kits, also known as press kits, are an expansion of your press release. It is usually a high quality folder containing your press materials - press releases, brochures, collateral materials, company biography, news clippings, photographs, contact information and any other relevant materials. These are frequently used to attract new residents or property owners. They are also made available to the media

by request when someone is seeking more information about your NN center. Electronic press kits, also known as EPKs, might also contain videotapes of relevant information, for example, news spots, informational videos, commercials - those types of things.

Next, we have special events. These offer a terrific way for any NN center to get some good press. Having your NN center associated with popular events is sure to garner positive recognition. For example, say your NN center is involved in putting on a pancake breakfast to raise money for the local humane society or Tsunami victims. This generosity, caring and concern are sure to have an effect on how others see your business from that point forward. Not only that, but these events often receive large amounts of media coverage, especially if there's a politician or local celebrity appearance.

We also suggest advertisements or public service announcements, also known as PSAs. NN centers could put together advertisements not with the aim of selling their services, but to generate goodwill. Take for example a brewing company developing an advertisement discouraging drinking and driving or a tobacco company developing ads urging youngsters not to smoke. Ads like these, known as public service

announcements, are not made with the goal of increasing sales or services, although the goodwill they create can contribute to increased sales and services in a roundabout way.

Speeches, when done well, few things can convey your message like a well-delivered speech. The speech must be concise, entertaining and well articulated. NN center directors may be asked to speak at a college or high school function before a group or a club or any number of events. But don't just sit around and wait to be invited, take the proactive route and volunteer to speak. Inform the community about your services and about the resources that you offer.

Public appearances, placing a representative from your NN center at various events can yield numerous benefits to your NN center. It is a way of taking part in the community, showing your interest in opening up a line of communication. There are many places and events at which to make appearances, such as charity galas and fund-raisers, community symposia, chamber of commerce conventions and mixers, and many others. The calendar is full of them. It's just a matter of having someone present to show that your NN center is concerned with what is going on in the community.

Now that we've provided a general overview of the elements and types of public relations strategies, I will turn to our presenters for more specific examples. I'm excited to introduce our first presenter, Mr. Tony Hagerty, who is a HUD NN Coordinator for Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and North Dakota, and he will present Successful Strategies for Translating Goodwill Into Equipment and Assistance for NN centers. Following Mr. Hagerty will be Ms. Sandra Pinal, who is the director of one of our new centers, the Senior Center at Villa de Guadalupe in San Jose, California, and she will be talking about her center's success in enhancing the public image and working with residents. And, we also have Mr. Craig Knudsvig on the line from North Dakota, and he has joined us before, and he's going to be sharing some effective and ineffective strategies for enhancing the public image of his two NN centers. After we have completed the presentation, we're going to ask for your questions, your comments, your ideas, and just learn from each other.

So, at this point, I will turn the call over to Mr. Hagerty. Thank you.

T. Hagerty

How are you doing? How's everybody there?

E. Ross

I'm sorry?

T. Hagerty How's everybody there?

E. Ross Great.

T. Hagerty Good. I couldn't hear you. Something is wrong with my phone. I got dropped, so sorry. Okay. I'm going to talk about partnerships. I'm going to take a center that I have here in Greeley, Colorado. It's a small city; Craig can appreciate that. The center is big and has made various partnerships and many partnerships within that small city. They have three rules for "partnershiping," but before I get into the three rules, I'm going to tell you about some of the partners.

They have made partners with the City of Greeley; the University of Northern Colorado (UNC); Office Depot, which is a big partner up there, and the Weld County Employment Services, as well as the Weld County School System. Now, all of these partners didn't come around right away. It took many years for them to bridge the gap in some of these partnerships, especially UNC. To know about this center, you have to know about the area, okay? The area is UNC. Greeley is UNC, the University of Northern Colorado. That's what makes up Greeley. So that is like the biggest thing in that whole small city. So once they got that

partner, their center grew. That partner provides on-site staff, internships, computers, numerous computer programs, computer recycling program - they provide so many things to that center because they've partnered with them that it has created a sense it's a kind of, "run and get off the ground" at an enormous rate. They've been around for quite a long time, but they were always small.

Now, the three rules for this center: For this one center, their rules for partnerships are, the first rule is: Do not tap out a partner. Simply put, what they mean by that is they don't overstay their welcome with their partner. When a partner does provide support, they make sure that they quickly follow their number two rule, and the number two rule is: Make sure a partner hears their appreciation. They write their thank you letters, but they also mention them when talking to the media up in Greeley. When they're talking to the city, the mayor or any other city officials, they make sure that they tell them about that partnership and how strong it is.

Every time a computer is donated by one of their partners, they put a tag on it saying who it came from, so people realize that and understand where it came from. So that partnership grows and the people that are in that lab appreciate the partnership that's going on. And then, their third

rule is: Don't say "no" to a partner's request. They made that rule up because up in a small town, unlike a big city, in a small area, when you have a partner, and I know Craig would understand this, when you have a partner, you have to "give and receive." You just don't receive, like in a big city, say, in New York or in Atlanta, you don't just "get." You have to give back because it is a true partnership. So, whenever they ask for someone, those partners like UNC, when they want to use that lab for some outreach program, they always have to say "yes," because the minute they say "no," the partnership will completely dissolve, because they feel like you're not giving back. So those are the three rules of that one center for partnerships.

I believe that the most important rule of the three is don't tap out a partner. Don't use, if you create a partnership with a company, an organization, a city, don't use it until they say. "Okay, we've had enough. We're moving on to somebody else." Use them scarcely, only when you really need something from them, okay? That's why it's good to create multiple partnerships in the community, not one, even if it's a big company because you will tap that person or that company out. So, if you create multiple partnerships even with small partners, small organizations, small businesses and spread that wealth, you know what you need, spread it out,

you won't tap anybody out, and I've seen that as the HUD Coordinator here of five states, I've seen that over and over again when they tap out the partner and the partner goes away and then their center goes down because that's the only person they have been using. So, it's very important to go out and find new partners, okay, and they can be small partners, city partners, volunteers could be a partnership, but to find as many partnerships in that community as you can.

So, those are the three rules for one Neighborhood Networks center. I was going to use Craig's, but since Craig is on the phone, I won't talk about that. So, that's about all that I have.

E. Ross Thanks, Tony. Thank you very much. Sandra, would you like to go ahead?

S. Pinal Sure. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Sandra Pinal, and I'm actually the Coordinator for Villa de Guadalupe Apartments in San Jose, California. I also work as the director, the main director. I'm the main contact person for the NNC. I helped develop the Senior Center in the Villa de Guadalupe Neighborhood Networks Center eight months ago, so it's brand new. It has been open now for the past two weeks. We had a great grand

opening last December and it was very successful and we were able to get our name, the name of the NNC, in the newspaper, the local newspaper of the city of San Jose.

E. Ross Great.

S. Pinal Yes. It was very nice. We had some city councils come out here and actually give some speeches to all the residents here and to all the people that were able to contribute and come out here and meet with us and celebrate this grand opening.

Overall, we serve seniors more than any other group—I'm sorry—any other age group. However, we are not comprised to only serve seniors. As we evolve, we'll be including activities for other age groups. Well, making the Senior Center at Villa de Guadalupe appealing for residents has not been easy because, as I've mentioned, they are seniors and they are a little bit hard to convince. However, I've managed along with my partners and our steering committee to get the residents out of their homes by accommodating their needs and likes.

The residents and neighbors of the Senior Center at Villa de Guadalupe

expressed to me through a survey what they thought about having a NNC in the community. Through conducting the survey, I was able to tailor strategies that will satisfy the suggestions regarding the Neighborhood Networks center, which was great and is working out. So far, it has been working out great. We have a very good turnout in regards to the residents coming out here and using our NNC.

After gathering information from the survey, we decided on forming the steering committee, which was formed to help guide the evolution of the NNC. The members of the steering community are AIMCO staff, which is my employer, Pacific Housing staff, the Catholic Charities of San Jose, California, CK, Foothill College and representatives from the . . . Organization, which is part of our neighborhood. Every one of these organizations contributes to the growth of our community, besides our Neighborhood Networks, the growth of our community and the advancement to the 21st century technology.

In order to get started with the NNC, I had to contact our partner nonprofit organization, Pacific Housing. With their help, my community was able to obtain five computers and get the residents interested to start to learn about the computers and the Internet. Since obtaining the computers, the

residents have been delighted to know that, soon, they would be able to use the computer and learn how to work with them and make the best out of their time invested in the NNC.

Marketing the NNC to the residents and neighbors takes time and effort.

The first step is forming partnerships with institutions and organizations around the neighborhood, which is exactly what I did. The more support you can obtain for the NNC, the more people will be attracted to come and learn. I was able to get the San Jose State University's volunteers to come to tutor the computer classes. Another partnership performed was of my employer, AIMCO and CK. CK is a company that partners with Cisco Systems in San Jose, California. The instructors CK was able to hire for the classes are from the Cisco Academy of Foothill College.

Besides offering computer classes, we're also offering English as a second language classes (ESL). For these ESL classes, a local high school will be sending their students to perform service learning and tutor both the ESL and computer classes.

Another great partner, HUD, was also essential in teaching my partners and me how to make the Neighborhood Networks center more accessible and interesting for the residents and the neighbors. HUD's START tool,

which helps to calculate and complete the budget for three years, which was already mentioned but, I need to say that, too. To run the new Neighborhood Networks center, the books that come with the START tool are beneficial for the fact that whether you're running a family or senior building, you have plenty of ideas as far as what you can do and how to promote your NNC and make it a success for you and for everyone in the community.

As I mentioned, there are more resources that help the NNC get started and make it appealing to the residents. For me, the connections with the organizations in and around the community, you form more support for the Neighborhood Networks center.

With this support, you will be able to make the NNC work positively for the residents and the neighbors. Usually, the best and the most effective marketing is the one done through word-of-mouth. Other forms that I have used are the resident meetings, where I emphasize the fact that the computer classes are available and placing notices on posting boards, posting the classes and schedules for computer classes, sticking notes on people's doors, attending meetings of the organizations that I seek help from and looking at how the NNC benefits them, letting them know how

we can help their organization as well, so it's a mutual balance. I can help them and they can help me as far as getting more computers here and having more people coming out here. As mentioned by Tony, the partnerships that you can build are the ones that are going to make you stronger, and the more partnerships you can get, the more you're going to get out of them and the more you're going to offer to them. So, it's a two-way street kind of thing. I find it very, very beneficial.

Let's see. To start on the Neighborhood Networks center, you can make sure that the first people that come to the classes see the advantage of having the Neighborhood Networks center at hand and some very useful tactics in regard to this in order to make it more appealing for the residents and this way enhancing your image for your Neighborhood Networks center is to show them what can be done by browsing the Internet. They can view it in their own language and looking at what's happening in their countries right now, do grocery shopping online, pay bills online, and all kinds of other things that we can do on the Internet. And just by teaching them that, that can get them to get other residents involved and so forth, everybody will pretty much benefit from that as well as the directors of the Neighborhood Networks centers and HUD overall.

This week, I just want to give a small notice, a note. This week, our NNC will be receiving a plaque in recognition of being another property within Neighborhood Networks center, thus improving the apartments that the seniors live in and this is pretty much a stepping-stone for our community, because we didn't have a Neighborhood Networks center before. So now, we are a part of the 21st century and moving on forward. That's all for me. I hope that was interesting and useful for you.

E. Ross Tremendously, Sandra. I just want to thank you for sharing that and commend your efforts. You've been very busy over the last eight months, and it sounds like, particularly, over the last two weeks. I have a number of questions for you, but in all fairness, since we're saving all questions to the end, I'll save them until our last presenter speaks, but I just wanted to thank you for sharing that information.

S. Pinal Thank you.

E. Ross Craig, would you like to go ahead and take it away?

C. Knudsvig Okay. My name is Craig Knudsvig. I'm with the Grand Forks Housing

Authority in Grand Forks in North Dakota. We have two centers, one of them has been around for a while since '96, the other one is just a bit over three years old.

I need to start by saying that what I'm going to talk about is just some of the basics of how we go about trying to make sure that people see us in the light that we want. Tony and Sandra both gave a lot of good information and some of this may be repetitious, but I certainly hope that it's useful. So, I'm just going to kind of go through sort of a laundry list of things that we do that we know works, and some things that we have tried that we're not so thrilled with, and then a couple of things to wrap up at the end, and a couple of comments about what Tony and Sandra said.

I think for us, the bottom line is still, in terms of the way people perceive us, it's still customer service. Our only rule is really to make sure that the clients that use our centers are successful. We try to provide nonjudgmental support and we try to make sure that they see us, those actual clients of the centers, that they see us as doing everything we can to help them. That includes in this definition of clients, it includes our partners, because we see our centers as a place where they can deliver many services that they would otherwise have difficulty getting out there.

So we see in this case our partners, in many cases, partner agencies, at least, as center clients or center customers, and we believe that customer service is the best way we can create that positive image.

Some other things, make sure your staff is as competent as you can do, and that's hard when you have many things going on at once and as fast as technology changes, but the more competent your staff is, whether it be answering questions about computer hardware and software or knowing the area of human services or anything like that, the more confidence you'll create in your center and the more goodwill and the better positive image you will create.

We try to maintain a level of equipping our centers with the best possible equipment. Now, yes, I know that's tough. It's expensive and funds are limited, but when we have to make a choice about where to spend our money, we always look at equipment first, because that also has a tremendous influence on that image that people have of you. Right along with that is just the maintenance of facilities. It's amazing what people take away. They will notice that you take care of your place and that you want it to be a nice place for them to come.

People judge you by listening to the opinions of others, and a broad base of support from the community is really crucial - from the community, from the neighborhood around the center, from residents - and these opinions need to be based on those folks having an accurate understanding of your mission. So you have to keep putting it out there. You have to keep stating it. You have to make sure that the people that are going to form an opinion about you and share it with others are accurate in what you give them and what they're going to carry to someone else.

Some of the things that we've done that have worked. When we've had grand openings for a center, of course, we had two of those, and when we've had things like anniversary celebrations, Neighborhood Networks Week, which we have a large celebration for every summer, we invite everyone who's even remotely involved with us. There's a story about a guy that walked into a trophy shop and he didn't know where he was. He was just looking for directions and he looked around and he said, "Wow, this guy is good." We want people to see the same thing. We want them to come to our events and see all of the other people who are there supporting us and to say, "These guys must be pretty good or all these other folks wouldn't be here." I think that has really been since the day we opened our first center, and had a turn out that amazed us. I think that

has been something that has carried our image a long ways.

We also did a video and this is something that can be hard to pay for, but we did a video about our centers and about our efforts a number of years ago. Sometimes, you can get people to fund that. If you have a college with an industrial technology department or something, I think you might be able to get them to do it. But that video has created pictures in people's minds after, I guess, eight years it's still out there. We still get people referring to it.

Another important piece of public relations and of your image that we found that works is communications. We do lots of different reports. We report monthly to a couple of different boards that own the property or the board of the managing organization that I work for. We keep them current. We make sure there are no blank spots in their understanding of how and what we're doing. We try to give them things to say, so that when they are asked, "I know you're on the board of this organization, what can you tell us?" we try to make sure they have accurate and current information. We also send a report every month to the city council, not as a requirement, but as a courtesy and that has been good to us. Annually, we do a report that we distribute as widely as we can to partners and

anyone in the community that we can give that to without worrying about whether or not they really need it, and frankly, without worrying a great deal about the cost, and that has helped us in the long run. Once again, we do that on an ongoing basis.

We also distribute our calendar monthly. We do it by mail. We do it electronically for those who want it that way. We get those names of people that come to the center or that contact us in other ways or that we contact in other ways. We update that periodically to make sure we're not sending it wastefully, but that has really created a picture in people's minds and the community over these years of what we are and what we do. And we maintain a Web site. If you want to see what that looks like, it's at www.lagrove.com and we try to upgrade that on a regular basis.

Something that Sandra mentioned that I want to echo is just staying in touch with HUD. We've got wonderful support from the Denver Multifamily Office, and a part of that I know is because we let them know what we're doing and we have a good relationship with them. They're never in doubt about what's going on out here. I think Tony would agree with that, and we certainly feel that that is a part of our public relations work. We do the same kind of thing with grantors, people that give us

funds. We make sure they know how their money is being spent so they have that information, and we keep people in-the-loop about the results of the things that we do.

Some things that haven't worked so well, and you shouldn't be afraid to try things, but you're going to have things that don't work so well. One of the things that we have found is that we need to make sure we maintain a positive, entrepreneurial, uplifting kind of an image. We serve an awful lot of people that are in various points of contacts with what I'll call—I hope I don't offend anybody, but I call it the “welfare system,” and that's the people that are using everything from fuel and heating assistance to food stamps and TANF funds and those kinds of things, and those are all important supports for the people that we serve.

But as everyone knows, there's an image out there of the people we serve that is very hard for them to overcome, and we believe we're doing the right thing by presenting ourselves as a different approach, an approach of that uplifting, self-sufficiency type support and trying to keep ourselves from looking like a rehab center or something like that. That isn't to say that you don't want those other programs as partners because you certainly do, but you need to make sure that your image is what you want it to be

and that it is positive.

Another thing, and I think Tony kind of alluded to this in some of the things that he mentioned, and that's out-of-balance partnerships. If you're overusing a partner, that will get you in trouble pretty quickly. The other side of it is, if you are letting that partner's contact with others be incorrect, you have to make sure, as I've said earlier, that they know what you're doing and that they have that information that's accurate so you don't get swallowed up by someone else's agenda. Even if it's a good one, you want to make sure that you sort of brand yourself and you need to sort of be in charge of that.

One of the things that we found that doesn't work so well. I talked about mailing out our calendars. Direct mail without personal contact for us has really not done anything. We've gotten some contacts from them, but in terms of image building, it doesn't seem to do as much good. As a matter of fact, I almost think it goes the other direction.

Sometimes things work and sometimes things don't. One of the things that we found is that if we don't do proper planning for the major things, we do that are going to be out there and people are going to see and touch

and feel, if we don't do that planning piece, we're probably not going to look very good even if the effort is moderately successful. So, one of the big things that hasn't worked is a poorly planned activity.

I'm going to make some comments about the things that Tony and Sandra said because I think it's important to echo those. Tony talked about or actually to begin with, Ebony talked about—just setting objectives, budget, staff planning, all of the things that public relations or image planning can do. It's really important that you keep in mind as you're developing this that it will relate to the day-to-day work that involves those things and make sure that you understand who your public is and how you're going to get that to them.

We use a different approach for residents, for people in the neighborhood, for government, for officials or partners, and again, if you do that planning you'll be able to react to that. Tony talked about the city of Greeley and our community at Grand Forks is just slightly larger, but very similar in nature. We have a university here that's about the same size as University of Northern Colorado, and it is one of the things that drives what we do in this town and they're a good partner for us, and if you have access to university, there's all kinds of ways that they can be a good

partner.

And then, Sandra talked about meeting the needs of her residents, and I just think that is so important, and it's important in fund raising, it's important in facility planning and it's important in buying equipment, but it is also important in that public image piece, because if you meet people's needs, they're going to have a good image and promote that for you.

To sort of wrap up the thoughts that I have, you need to let people help you, and when they help you, they will invariably have an opportunity to talk to others about what they did and they're certainly going—they're not going to say I helped somebody that has a bad image. So, the point is if you let them help, you will probably give them an opportunity to say something good about you. There's a question you always have to ask as you look to affect someone's opinion and that is, "What do you want them to do when you're done?" And I think if you sit down and ask yourself who are we trying to create an image for, and then what do you want them to do when you're done. I think that will help any formal public relations efforts that you're planning but also your day-to-day work. If you remember what it is you want the people that you're in contact with to do,

I think that will help you.

Two just final thoughts that are probably so basic. I maybe don't even need to mention them here, but it's still about person-to-person contact. It is about when you're working with the partnerships, as Tony and Sandra talked about, it is about staying in personal contact with them whether it is by phone or even by e-mail or if you could go there and shake their hand and thank them or to explain what's going on or to keep them in the loop, it still is about person to person, and then it's about doing a good job of what you set out to do, and if you promised to do something you need to do it.

So, those are some very basic things. We have a difficult time with the local media. We have one newspaper. We have—I don't know—numerous radio stations, but they're all owned by two companies. So, there isn't a lot of reason for them to compete for our news, so we have to do it using those very basic, the simple things in your toolkit, and that's what seems to work for us. So, that's all I have.

E. Ross

Thank you very much, Craig, and thank you, in particular, for those last key points and with sharing your situation with the local media and how

that can be challenging. I think there are probably a number of NN centers that can relate to that experience. I'd like to open the call up at this time to questions from the participants on the call, Barbara.

While people are doing that Sandra, if we could go back to you for a second. I was really intrigued to learn more about your steering committee. Can you talk a bit about the process of developing the steering committee? How did you all decide whom to invite to the steering committee and what is the goal or objective of that committee?

S. Pinal

Well, first, we decided to form this committee because we needed to find out how we were going to shape the NNC, and the only way to get it shaped up is by having the contributors, which is my employer AIMCO, some of our staff, some of the staff of the Pacific Housing, our nonprofit organization, and the staff is going—that's actually running the classes which is people from the organization of CK which is partnered with the Cisco Systems in San Jose. I mean since all of us are directly involved into making this NNC a success for our community, we needed to get all of us together and figure out how we were going to handle about the classes, where we were heading, which is slow—it is a slow process, but we're slowly heading towards making it more than just only—I mean it's

for our neighbors and for our residents, but right now, since it's just brand new, we just opened, we only have some of the residents coming. But, that's the main goal for the steering committee is to make it a success, to make sure that we are not lacking anywhere.

If there's something that we need to discuss along with the residents who are also involved in the steering committee, then we get that on the table and discuss it and see what's working, what's not working and change things around. So, it's pretty much just to shape up our NNC to make sure that we don't fall back on something, that we're not missing a point somewhere and that's just the main focus of it.

E. Ross It sounds like a great idea. Good luck with that.

S. Pinal Thanks.

E. Ross Barbara, are there any questions?

Coordinator Our first question is from Nedra Long. Please go ahead.

N. Long I'm Nedra Long from Washington Neighborhood Networks Center. We

have a computer center there, and my question is I need Craig's Web site address.

C. Knudsvig Okay. It's www.lagrave.com

N. Long Okay. Thank you.

C. Knudsvig You're welcome.

E. Ross Thank you, Nedra.

Coordinator Our next question is from Jeanine Schmidt. Please go ahead.

J. Schmidt Thanks. I have a question as far as community outreach. Our funding by HUD is being cut because a private company is buying the resident housing out, and so we're really trying to—our program has been quite successful, but we really were starting to try and write grants and everything and really doing the partnering. I am the new director here. I've only been here for, this is my second week, and so I was wondering as far as ideas to format a plan so we can keep this going, the center going.

E. Ross Well, Jeanine, that's a great question. Where are you located?

J. Schmidt In Durango, Colorado.

E. Ross Well, you have Tony Hagerty on the line. Have you all met?

T. Hagerty No. Is this my Durango Neighborhood Networks Center?

E. Ross I think that this could be a question that we could maybe talk further about offline?

T. Hagerty Yes.

E. Ross So, if you like, we can follow up with you by the end of the week to maybe talk about some resources.

T. Hagerty Can you give me a call? Do you have my number?

J. Smith No, I do not.

T. Hagerty Okay. It's (303) 672-5343, extension 1180. Just give me a call this

afternoon.

J. Smith Tony?

T. Hagerty Yes?

J. Smith Thank you.

T. Hagerty Thank you.

E. Ross Thanks, Tony. Thank you, Ms. Smith. Craig, I had a couple of questions for you while we're waiting for the next question. You mentioned your Web site and I've actually checked out your Web site. It's very informative. I'm wondering, do you have that on other, like community Web sites, as a link, so people know how to access that information?

C. Knudsvig Yes. It's linked at several different levels and places throughout the community. That's important because people go online; they're not necessarily looking for "Neighborhood Networks centers." That term might not mean anything to them. They might look for computer classes or they might look for afterschool programs, but yes, we've got it linked to

city sites, several university sites, several of our partners have links to it.

That really is important. I'm glad you mentioned it.

E. Ross Thank you. I have another question, but I want to check with Barbara first and see if we any questions.

Coordinator Okay. I have Jeanine Schmidt again to ask a question. Please go ahead, ma'am.

J. Smith One idea we did have, though, to reach out to the community, is do an open-house. I was just wondering as far as if other people have done something like that before and how that works.

T. Hagerty I can take that one. I just had a Neighborhood Networks center open up here in town last year. It's called Allied Jewish East Apartment Complex and they did an open-house. After they had the grand opening, then they had an open-house. When they had their open-house, they invited everybody from the community. They actually sent out invitations to those people, invited them. They probably got about 50 percent participation, which is pretty good, because Denver is a big city. So they got about 50 percent participation of the invites they sent out, and out of

that 50 percent, they probably got four or five partners. So it was a really good idea for them. I think that's a great idea, but it depends on what you tell them when they come in to the open-house. Kind of like Craig said, you really have to show them what you are about and you have to make that, like, burn into their minds. That this is what we're about, this is our direction, this is where we want to go and I would like you to join us and help us achieve that, type of attitude.

C. Knudsvig Absolutely right. This is Craig. I couldn't agree more. Also, as I said myself, I agree with, you know, invite everybody you can. Don't get too fine. You're not building a piano here. Just invite people and let them come in, let them talk to each other and make sure they know your mission and share about that. You'll be amazed at the number of potential partnerships and ongoing positive relationships that you'll develop out of that. When we did one, we called it a "Service Fair," and we invited some organizations to come and set up little booths or stations about what they do, but that really was almost lost in just general networking that went on.

E. Ross Thank you. Barbara, are there any more questions?

Coordinator I'm showing we have question from Joyce Mortimer. Please go ahead,

ma'am.

J. Mortimer Hello. I'd like to know from any of the three of you, what you are doing to evaluate your staff, to train them and to retain them, to retain the residence volunteers? Have any of your partners been willing to provide continuing education units or steps toward certifications or community award presentations?

S. Pinal If I may—this is Sandra Pinal. I don't have residents helping out as tutors. What I've done is get tutors, but from outside, from local high schools and colleges and the university. They come out here and volunteer their time, and they're actually the ones that help the residents learn. So there's really—I'm not sure of your location, like what's available to you, but if you have any of those resources, as far as obtaining tutors from your colleges or even the high schools, they do service learning, that can probably help you and help the residents. It will take the stress of being a tutor to the residents. I mean, maybe sometimes they could become, but in the long run, you will want to have tutors from outside coming in to help the residents.

C. Knudsvig This is Craig. We have had some substantial success with residents as

volunteers, but that success is more a lot of help from a few residents as opposed to a lot of residents helping. One of the reasons is that many of our residents have been able to move on to other housing situations and to homeownership and things like that, but for those that are involved, one of the things you have to do is find a way to recognize them. We have made pretty good use of things like asking our partners to make sure that when they get a chance, they recognize resident volunteers or those kinds of things. There's nothing that works much better than a "thank you."

E. Ross Good point, Craig. So, Barbara, are there any more questions?

Coordinator Well, I'm showing that Ms. Kimberly Timms, she's one of the leaders on the conference. Her line was open to speak.

E. Ross Okay. Hello, Kimberly.

K. Timms Hello.

E. Ross Thank you for joining us. Would you like to add in on any comments made or share briefly some of your experiences?

K. Timms I just was going to really jump in on the part on the open-house. I think that 's one good way of getting residents involved is having a open-house or re-grand opening, kind of getting them out and also following-up on your—trying to do it once a month on the residents getting involved. Basically asking them what are some of their needs, listen to some of their needs and try to at least get one or two their needs met, whatever it might be in the community. It also helps you out in the center in the long run.

 You'll pretty much get a lot of volunteers that way to collaborate with you in the center and also as a coordinator, a leader, director, you're going to have to step outside the office paperwork sometime and get involved in a community door-to-door, being involved with some of your city council. It goes over and beyond. And as far as helping you out to connect with partnerships, and even with the schools and colleges and also being involved in some of your youth sports activity that's out there for building your community center up.

E. Ross Great idea. Kimberly, thank you so much for joining the call. Kimberly is with Fort Worth Center within Fort Worth, Texas. So thank you for sharing those ideas, Kimberly.

Barbara, if there aren't any more questions, it is a little after 4 p.m. and we want to stay true to our time frame, we will conclude the call. But we do have time for one more question if there is someone in queue.

Coordinator Okay. I'm showing no further questions at this time.

E. Ross Okay. I'd like to thank, everyone...

T. Hagerty Can I say one more thing?

E. Ross Sure.

T. Hagerty I'm sorry. I just want to tell everybody, like Craig said; a university is a big deal to partner up with. They won't just provide staff and they won't just provide some programs that you can share. A big thing and I see this far too much in my states as not grabbing this, if you partner up with a university, of all the companies that you can ever partner up with, all the organizations, a university is going to upgrade computers continuously on a yearly basis. If you get into a really good partnership going with the university, you're going to have new computers coming every year. So you can always be—especially if you don't have a lot of money to work

with you, you're going to always be on at least the upper edge of what's coming out that's new. What they've done up in Greeley is they've partnered up with UNC and they get so many computers that they've actually been able to open up five new centers in the last year and a half from their computers, from UNC's computers.

So if you haven't partnered with the university in your area, it really would benefit you to really look into that and try to get a partnership going. I just wanted to say that.

E. Ross Tony, that's a good point. Definitely. I'd just like to thank all of our presenters for sharing their best practices and especially Craig sharing what hadn't worked because it's good to get that perspective as well. And for all the participants who are listening in on the call, sharing their questions, their ideas, I think it was a very informative call, and I look forward to speaking with you all again next month.

T. Hagerty Thank you, Ebony. And thanks, Craig.

C. Knudsvig Thank you, Tony.

T. Hagerty We appreciate you here, man.

C. Knudsvig I assume. Bye, guys.

E. Ross Bye-bye.

T. Hagerty Okay. Bye-bye.

E. Ross Thank you, everyone.

Coordinator Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your participation on today's
conference call. At this time, your conference has been completed. You
may disconnect.